



# 9 things great leaders never say

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(MoneyWatch) Merriam-Webster defines "leadership" as "the office or position of a leader." But you don't have to be the boss to lead. And since leadership is a trait that is looked at closely when deciding on whom to promote, showing you have what it takes to guide others may help you get into that top spot. The first step is speaking the lingo. Here are 7 phrases to erase from your vocabulary, ASAP:

## **"Don't take this wrong but ..."**

This wishy-washy statement shows that you're not in command or can't articulate your position effectively. "Leaders who really want you to understand what they are saying take the time to craft the message," says management psychologist Karissa Thacker.

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## **"I had strong results this quarter"**

The word "I" should be used rarely when accepting praise if you want to be seen as a leader. At the same time, avoid addressing your team as "you" or "you guys." "Either 'we' did it as a team or 'we' did not," says Thacker. "A more disciplined communicator would say, 'Let's give ourselves a hand for this quarter.' "

### **"It's not my fault"**

It's just as important to take responsibility for things going wrong as it is to take credit when they go right. "Whether their role in the poor performance was direct or indirect, great leaders take a 'buck stops here' approach," says Ben Dattner, Ph.D., author of "The Blame Game: How the Hidden Rules of Credit and Blame Determine Our Success or Failure."

### **"We always did it that way at my old company"**

Leaders are not dictators; they are innovators and open to change. "Employers dislike it when a leader brings in past experience that is not relevant to their industry or business model," says Elizabeth Lions, author of "I Quit! Working for You Is Not Working for Me." "They prefer having the leader find new and innovating ideas that are relevant today -- not 10 years ago."

### **"I want to hire people who think like me"**

Real leaders don't want "yes men" or women, says Bob Kelleher, president and founder of The Employee Engagement Group: "Real leaders understand that the key to innovate is

diversity of thought." By the same token, employees who want to impress good managers should bring their own perspective -- and not just parrot what their boss has already said.

### **"Who do you think you are?"**

A real leader will listen to ideas from everyone they're managing. "Winning solutions can and often do come from anywhere, making it imperative that you open lines of communication and welcome feedback and insights from any source," says Scott Steinberg, author of "Becoming Essential." Encourage your co-workers to shoot ideas to you by e-mail, and if it's convenient, keep your door (and phone lines) open. "The more you insulate yourself, the more you close yourself off to opportunity," says Steinberg.

### **"That's just the way I am"**

As a leader, you should be encouraging your team to grow and change and guide by example. "Leaders with this growth mindset are not only more likely to lead successful change initiatives, they're growing themselves, becoming more agile, more able to deal with complexity and more creative in times of constraint," notes Jennifer Berger, author of "Changing on The Job: Developing Leaders for a Complex World."

### **"Don't ask questions"**

You want your team to follow you, but not blindly. "In fact, real leaders need to pump folks full of good information, then sit back and listen to their feedback," says Greg Slamowitz,

author of "Flip the Pyramid: How Any Organization Can Create a Workforce That Is Engaged, Aligned, Empowered and On Fire."

### **"Failure is not an option"**

No leader wants their team to fail. But great leaders do have some tolerance for failure, says Slamowitz. "They stress the importance of learning from failure and that if there is no failure, the organization is not trying hard enough."

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